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NEWS

Winchester teacher contract settled

CHRIS STEVENS | CORRESPONDENT

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Winchester resident Shammi Ghelani Gohel snapped this photo of teachers picketing outside the high school earlier this year. The new contract between the teachers union and the town has finally been settled. COURTESY PHOTO/SHAMMI GHELANI GOHEL

After a somewhat lengthy negotiation session that, at times, saw teachers marching with signs, the School Committee and the Winchester Teachers Association settled the teachers' contract.

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Superintendent Dr. Frank Hackett said that under the new three-year agreement, teachers will receive what he called a 2-3 split for the current year, which averages out to a 2% increase. The teachers will receive a 3.5% increase for the 2026-27 school year and a 3.75% increase for the final year of the contract.

There was also some language related to steps and columns, medical leave and parental leave, Hackett said.

“With the support of the membership and our Contract Action Team, we gained fantastic paid parental leave language, an increased COLA and longevity and several improvements to existing language,” said WEA President Sheryl Norris.

Negotiations started last spring, but as School Committee Chair Karen Maruyama Bolognese said there was little to no negotiating over the summer.

“It went on for a little while but it was productive,” Hackett said.

He called the settlement a relief for everyone. While teachers carried signs on occasion and wore red in solidarity, inside the negotiation room, Hackett said he thought they made good progress.

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Norris noted “members supported contract negotiations by wearing red and WEA buttons and displaying signs during standouts,” but she and Bolognese agreed with Hackett.

"The WEA and the School Committee have worked collaborativel
three contracts to date,” Norris said.

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Bolognese said after seeing what happened in other communities, like Beverly, Gloucester and Marblehead where teachers voted to strike in 2024, she thought Winchester's process was a collaborative and thoughtful one.

"We believe very much in finding common ground," she said.

Having a three-year contract also offers relief when it comes to budget planning, Hackett said.

"We know the biggest line item when it comes to planning," he said.

About that planning

In early February, the Select Board voted to put an $11.5 million Prop. 2 ½ override question on the ballot. If approved by voters on March 21, roughly $4.1 million of it would go toward the schools.

Hackett called the decision "very encouraging," and said he had much respect for the State of the Town Committee and everyone who put in the work to get to the $11.5 million number.

Bolognese also said she was impressed with the group. She also said that while they have fingers crossed regarding the override, budget work is never truly done.

"We keep updating and tweaking things, and we have to look at a worse-case-scenario," she said, adding they will have to have worst-case-scenario discussions about what happens if the override doesn't pass.

In early February, the School Committee submitted three budgets to the Select Board. One reflected the needs of the department coming i $76,270,570, a second reflected a 5% increase over fiscal year 202

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behest of the State of the Town Committee or $73,936,504 and a third seeking a 3.1% increase over FY26 and $4 million from the town's free cash account. The latter budget is in case the override fails.

Chris Stevens is an award-winning journalist who has spent 25 years chasing, editing and photographing stories on the North Shore. She is the co-founder and managing editor of Gotta Know Medford.

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By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester

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The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On

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Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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